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# Urbana firm plans new headquarters

Sun, 02/16/2014 - 8:00am | [Don Dodson](#) [1]

An Urbana manufacturer that has already expanded several times hopes to add a 20,000-square-foot headquarters in the next year or two.

URBANA — An Urbana manufacturer that has already expanded several times hopes to add a 20,000-square-foot headquarters in the next year or two.

Creative Thermal Solutions, which develops air-conditioning and refrigeration technologies for residential, commercial and industrial use, plans to put the new headquarters immediately south and west of its existing five buildings at 2209 N. Willow Road, U.

The building, which company President Predrag "Pega" Hrnjak hopes will use "zero net energy," would make use of solar and wind technologies, as well as a high-efficiency heating, ventilating and air-conditioning system.

The headquarters would face East Anthony Drive in Urbana and be visible from Interstate 74.

It would have solar panels on its roof and perhaps some micro wind turbines atop the building, architect Vidar Lerum said.

Offices would be located west of the entrance to the headquarters, with conference and meeting space to the east.

The building would also include a self-service cafe for employees, as well as canopies linking the headquarters with other buildings in the complex.

Hrnjak said the building will go up "probably in a year or two," at an estimated cost of \$1.5 million to \$2 million.



[2]

**Photo by: Rick Danzl/The News-Gazette**  
ASHRAE President Bill Bahnfleth, left, tours Creative Thermal Solutions' facilities with company President Pega Hrnjak in Urbana.

Creative Thermal Solutions has 50 full-time employees, more than half of them holding advanced degrees in science and engineering.

Founded in 2003, the company has since expanded to five buildings encompassing 100,000 square feet.

Those buildings house more than 40 environmental chambers in which the company does developmental work on a multitude of projects, many of them in the refrigeration field. The temperature range of the chambers goes from minus 40 degrees Celsius to 65 degrees Celsius.

Stefan Elbel, the company's chief engineer, said Creative Thermal Solutions does work for the automotive industry as well as industrial plants and government agencies.

"Most of our projects focus on the U.S., but an enormous proportion are for international (clients), including Japan and Europe," Hrnjak said. "We cover the entire globe."

Hrnjak is a research professor in the Department of Mechanical Science and Engineering at the University of Illinois. He and Anthony Jacobi are co-directors of the university's Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Center.

Last week, Creative Thermal Solutions gave a tour of its facilities to William Bahnfleth, president of ASHRAE, a 54,000-member group once known as the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers.

Bahnfleth, a professor of architectural engineering at Penn State, earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in mechanical engineering from the University of Illinois, as well as a degree in music (pipe organ performance).

He was also a principal investigator at the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory in Champaign from 1985 to 1989, and visited there as well on Monday.

### **Creative's cool projects**

Among the projects Creative Thermal Solutions has worked on:

Carbon dioxide refrigeration for soft-drink bottle coolers

Carbon dioxide refrigeration for supermarket refrigeration cases, already in widespread use in Europe and Japan

Battery cooling for electric and hybrid vehicles

Ultra-low temperature freezers

Low-charge industrial ammonia chillers

Lightweight cooling vests for the military

Performance evaluations of air curtains (used to separate two adjoining spaces with different temperatures)

Work involving low Global Warming Potential (GWP) refrigerants

**#1** <sup>[3]</sup>

**Batman** <sup>[4]</sup> wrote on February 17, 2014 at 12:02 am

How does a full-time professor of the U of I on the university's payroll find time to run a company? Must be nice.

**#2** <sup>[5]</sup>

**jpowell1** <sup>[6]</sup> wrote on February 24, 2014 at 3:02 pm

By working 80-90 hours a week year round. I know the guy and the amount of effort he puts in both for UIUC and also for his company is insane. I knew his grad students when I was finishing up at UIUC and those guys are fully funded and supported. Better than many advisors I have seen. In addition to running a full research group and dealing with the ACRC stuff at school he also runs a business at the same time. I have never met anybody with that kind of drive.

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